

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 04149 021633Z

64

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 /064 W

----- 087774

R 012254Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1037

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

DIA WASHDC

CINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, OAS, ES, GT, HO, CS, PN, NU

SUBJECT: A COSTA RICAN VIEW OF CONDECA

REF: MANAGUA 4077

1. ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 19, 1976, THE AMBASSADOR HAD A LONG CONVERSATION WITH COSTA RICAN PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER, MARIO CHARPENTIER AT A CONDECA RECEPTION HOSTED BY NICARAGUAN DEFENSE MINISTER, COLONEL HEBERTO SANCHEZ. DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION, CHARPENTIER STATED THAT COSTA RICA ATTENDED THE CONDECA MEETING MAINLY TO KEEP WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE INTENTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF ITS CLOSEST NEIGHBORS (PANAMA AND NICARAGUA), AND TO AVOID BECOMING ISOLATED FROM SUB-REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.

2. CHARPENTIER ASSERTED THAT COSTA RICA DID NOT FACE THE SAME POLITICAL PROBLEMS OR SHARE THE VIEWS OF ITS NEIGHBORS CONCERNING THE INTERNAL OR REGIONAL SECURITY SITUATION. HE SAID THAT COSTA RICA DID NOT AT THIS TIME FACE AN INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGE. THE COMMUNISTS WERE WEAK AND SPLIT INTO FOUR CONTENDING FACTIONS.

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PAGE 02 MANAGU 04149 021633Z

TERRORIST ACTS WERE RELATIVELY RARE. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS NOT

REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT COMMUNIST SUBVERSION IN CENTRAL AMERICA. SUBVERSION EXISTED BUT THAT WAS NOT THE REAL DANGER. IN HIS VIEW, IT WAS THE UNDERLYING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS THAT BRED VIOLENT ATTACKS ON GOVERNMENTS. THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIMES BELIEVED IN MAINTAINING THEMSELVES THROUGH FORCE AND REPRESSION, AND LACKED THE LEGITIMACY OF FREELY ELECTED GOVERNMENTS, SUCH AS HIS OWN. HE DECLARED THAT HE OPPOSED THE CONDECA RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE PENETRATION AND SUBVERSION OF CENTRAL AMERICA BY INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM BECAUSE THAT WAS NOT THE MAIN SECURITY PROBLEM FACING COSTA RICA, OR THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS. WHILE HE WAS AGAINST DOMESTIC SUBVERSION OF ANY KIND, HE BELIEVED THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO FIGHT IT WAS THROUGH INTERNAL REFORMS NOT REPRESSION. IN ANY EVENT, COSTA RICA INTENDED TO PLAY NO MORE THAN A MINIMUM ROLE IN CONDECA.

3. COMMENT: IT SEEMED CLEAR FROM THIS CONVERSATION WITH CHARPENTIER THAT COSTA RICA CONTEMPLATES A TOKEN PARTICIPATION IN CONDECA, AND THAT IT WAS NOT BEING DRAWN TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES OUT OF STRONG CONCERN ABOUT REGIONAL SECURITY. AT BEST, CONDECA PROVIDED SOME INSURANCE AGAINST MORE SERIOUS CHALLENGES IN THE FUTURE, BUT MEMBERSHIP ALSO ASSOCIATED COSTA RICA WITH UNDEMOCRATIC REGIMES ABOUT WHICH IT FELT UNEASY. THEBERGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBINED MILITARY EXERCISES, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: powellba
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANAGU04149
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760334-0332
From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197609102/aaaadjor.tel
Line Count: 84
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MANAGUA 4077
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: powellba
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUL 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <27 OCT 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <27 OCT 2004 by powellba>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: A COSTA RICAN VIEW OF CONDECA
TAGS: MARR, ES, GT, HO, CS, PN, NU, OAS, CONDECA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006